

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Camila Güiza-Chavez, and I am a resident of New Haven.

I stand in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. I support this bill because I believe that every single human being deserves the right to healthcare coverage no matter who they are, no matter where they come from, how they got here, or how old they are. It is archaic and blatantly discriminatory that in our state, people without a social security number don't have the right to healthcare. This year, we are fighting so that young people between 8 and 18 years old can have access to healthcare coverage; and we'll keep on fighting next year and the following and the following until everyone in this state has access to the basic human right of healthcare.

I am an organizer with the Semilla Collective, and in my day job I co-direct an organization that works with immigrant and refugee women. It hurts me to see dear friends of mine as well as members of my community that I work and live alongside who know that, if they get sick or something happens to them, going to the doctor *isn't an option* because they are undocumented. It doesn't matter how much they work, how hard they work, or how much they pay in taxes every year to the state of CT and the federal government — they're still barred from seeing a doctor, they're barred from seeking mental health support, and they barely have the option of even going to the emergency room if they really need to because just one visit to the ER without insurance can lead to thousands of dollars in debt.

I ask the legislators to think about what kind of state we want to live in. Right now, the message that is being sent by the state is that CT cares about children below the age of 8 years old, but once that child turns 9 they're out of luck, and they're no longer worthy of health insurance. What logic is there to that? Why is a child of 8 worthy of having access to care, but not a child of 9? Not an adolescent, who's going through significant physical and psychological changes as we all do in that critical time of adolescence? Not their parents, grandparents, or siblings. Why is that? I ask you to please really consider, what is a 6, 7, 8 year-old to do when their mother gets sick — be it with a chronic illness, an extreme case of COVID, or an injury. What if that child's mother is a single mom, the head of the household, and she falls ill? If the pandemic has taught us anything it should teach us that all of our health and wellbeing is interconnected. We cannot have healthy families, healthy neighborhoods, or a healthy state if thousands of people in our communities are left to fend for their own survival and cannot receive medical attention when they need it. Last year's expansion of HUSKY to children 0-8 years of age was a step in the right direction, but it must be followed this year by a concrete plan to expand access to all for its effects to be meaningful, and if we want to be a state that respects the basic human rights of its residents.

I support S.B. 284 and I urge the committee to support and pass this legislation, and a plan to open healthcare access to all immigrants regardless of age, because healthcare is a human right.

Thank you for your time,
Camila Güiza-Chavez